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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [EAID](#) [ECON](#) [EFIN](#) [IBRD](#) [IMF](#) [PK](#) [RS](#)
SUBJECT: RUSSIA KEEPS RELATIONS WITH PAKISTAN ON THE CHEAP

REF: STATE 24367

Classified By: Acting Political M/C David Kostelancik for reasons 1.4 (b/d).

11. (C) We delivered reftel demarche, accompanied by a colleague from the Japanese Embassy, on March 19 to MFA Pakistan desk chief Andrey Starkov, who said that Russia would send a representative to the Pakistan Donors Conference in Tokyo. He could not say at what level the GOR would be represented, but assumed that it would be at the deputy foreign minister level or below, and could even fall to the Russian Ambassador in Tokyo. Starkov expressed surprise at the size of the planned U.S. pledge package of \$1 billion, and said that he expected Russia to attend the conference as an "observer" rather than as a donor. Japanese First Vice Minister Yabunaka encouraged Russia to attend the Tokyo conference "as a donor" during his March 18 meeting with DFM Denisov, according to our Japanese colleague, who said that Denisov did not respond to this request.

12. (C) Starkov updated us on Moscow's plans for bilateral meetings with Islamabad, which remain works in progress, suggesting that relations continue to move at their regular, limited pace. The GOR suggested holding the annual meeting of the joint working group on counter-terrorism, which did not meet at all in 2008, in Islamabad later this year, and the consultative group on strategic stability, which discusses regional and global issues, in Moscow, but had not received a response from Pakistan. Pakistan FM Kasuri was expected in Moscow to attend the March 27 Shanghai Cooperation Organization conference on Afghanistan, but a possible April visit to focus on bilateral issues was still under discussion. Starkov told us that he had heard rumors that Pakistan would like either the Russian President or Premier to visit, but Moscow would only consider such a gesture if there would be a substantive outcome.

13. (C) Commenting on developments in Pakistan, Starkov said that the latest clash between President Zadari and opposition leader Sharif demonstrated that the country remained politically unstable. He argued that despite the positive role Army Chief of Staff Kayani played in pressing the two leaders to reach a compromise, the military was poised to intervene should it appear the situation threatened to get out of control. Starkov reiterated that it would be better for Pakistan and the struggle against extremists if the military came back into power and Kayani ran the country as Musharraf had.
BEYRLE